MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS

NOAA
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
NORTHEAST REGION
HABITAT CONSERVATION DIVISION

April 2006

GLOUCESTER, MA OFFICE, ONE BLACKBURN DRIVE, GLOUCESTER, MA 01930

PROPOSED DREDGING OF INTERTIDAL MUDFLAT HABITATS

The Habitat Conservation Division (HCD) has met with representatives from the Marshfield Yacht Club and the Green Harbor Yacht Club in Marshfield, MA regarding applications to dredge large areas of intertidal mudflat for the purpose of marina expansion. Intertidal mudflats have been designated as "special aquatic sites" by the US Environmental Protection Agency, due to their importance to the marine ecosystem. Intertidal mudflats provide feeding and shelter for numerous species of finfish, and serve as habitat for a variety of shellfish and benthic invertebrates. The HCD will continue to work with the applicants and the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) in order to avoid and minimize adverse effects to these important resources. **(Christopher.Boelke@noaa.gov, 978/ 281-9131)**

FIRST ANNUAL MAINE COASTAL WATERS CONFERENCE

The First Annual Maine Coastal Waters Conference was held in Rockport, Maine on April 10. This one-day forum was designed to highlight the diversity and importance of Maine's coastal waters and habitats, and to identify management and conservation concerns. The conference targeted people from a full range of interest and involvement, including private citizens, students, researchers, consultants, and resource agency staff. The afternoon included 4 breakout sessions: Coastal Habitats, Diadromous Fish, Emerging Issues, and Linking Land Use to Coastal Resource Health. In the coastal habitats session, NOAA staff was invited to speak on state and federal regulations and mandates governing activities in nearshore coastal habitats and fisheries resources. Approximately 300 participants attended. The conference was sponsored by the USGS, Maine Department of Marine Resources, Department of Environmental Protection, and State Planning Office, the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve, Maine Sea Grant College Program, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service – Gulf of Maine Program. **(sean.mcdermott@noaa.gov, 978/ 281-9113)**

JAMES J. HOWARD MARINE SCIENCES LABORATORY, HIGHLANDS, NJ 07732

MID-ATLANTIC MITIGATION, LLC. CRAB ISLAND MITIGATION BANK

The mitigation bank review team met with the project proponents to discuss agency comments and next steps in the development of the proposed Crab Island Mitigation Bank. The bank site is located along the Raritan River in Sayreville, NJ. The site is currently a Phragmites dominated wetland. The project proponent plans to rehabilitate the existing marsh to improve tidal exchange and to replace the existing vegetation with Spartina species. Topics discussed included the proposed rule for compensatory mitigation for losses of aquatic resources published in the March 28, 2006 Federal Register and the definitions of enhancement, establishment, restoration and rehabilitation. Conservation easements, site protections, and the creation of upland islands were also discussed. **(Karen.Greene@noaa.gov, 732/ 872-3023)**

UNION DRY DOCK

HCD staff attended an interagency meeting to discuss Union Dry Dock's proposal to use water injection dredging to remove accumulated sediments from their facility. This method involves fluidizing the accumulated sediment by injecting it with water and moving it to a deeper area within the federal navigation channel. One of the primary concerns about the proposed methodology is the impact on water quality. Modeling done by the applicant indicates that it will take 30 days for the suspended sediment levels in the area to return to background levels. Other issues to consider include cumulative impacts and the policy of allowing this type of dispersive dredging to occur in the New York Harbor area. **(Karen.Greene@noaa.gov, 732/ 872-3023)**

OPEN HOUSE AT THE JAMES J. HOWARD LABORATORY

An open house has been scheduled for the Northeast Fisheries Science Center's James J. Howard Laboratory at Sandy Hook, NJ for September 29 and 30, 2006. HCD is participating on the planning committee for this event. A number of activities for adults and children are being planned. **(Karen.Greene@noaa.gov, 732/ 872-3023)**

SOUTHWINDS MARINA, LLC

Habitat staff provided comments to the ACOE in response to a public notice for a project that proposes to expand an existing marina on Forked River in Lacey Township, New Jersey. The applicant proposes to construct a fixed pier with associated piles and utilities. The 28 additional boat slips would bring the total number of boat slips to 110 at the marina. The proposal describes the use of CCA treated timbers to be used for the piers. NOAA Fisheries recommended the use of non-polluting materials to prevent treated wood leachates from entering the marine environment. **(anita.riportella@noaa.gov, 732/ 872-3116)**

DAGIT MARINA

Habitat staff met with state and federal agencies to discuss a proposal to develop a new 111 slip marina facility within an artificially created tidal lagoon in Egg Harbor Township, New Jersey. Development of the site involves construction of pier and floats made of non-polluting materials and hydraulic dredging of 28,816 cubic yards of accumulated sediments from within 5.7 acres of the lagoon, with the dredged material being piped to a contained disposal facility (CDF). A

1,415-foot low profile vinyl bulkhead and a reconstructed boat ramp are also included in the proposal. Issues that were discussed include wetlands impacts, possible water contamination from the dredge material effluent, and mitigation for wetland impacts that could not be avoided or further minimized. **(anita.riportella@noaa.gov, 732-872-3116)**

MILFORD FIELD OFFICE, 212 ROGERS AVENUE, MILFORD, CT 06460

FERRY TERMINAL PROPOSED AT VILLAGE OF HAVERSTRAW

The Village of Haverstraw in Rockland County, New York, is contemplating design and development of a new ferry terminal. The project entails relocating the Haverstraw-Ossining ferry service elsewhere in the Village's waterfront on the Hudson River and would include installation of a new ferry pier, surface parking, and a shelter for ferry passengers. A public promenade also would be established in the immediate ferry terminal vicinity. Milford Field Office staff has been invited to meet with the project engineers to discuss various design alternatives. This meeting likely will take place in June. **(Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov, 203/ 882-6504)**

COORDINATION RE-INITIATED FOR NEW YORK TIDAL POWER PROPOSAL

After a long hiatus, the New York District ACOE re-initiated coordination with Habitat Conservation staff for the demonstration phase of Verdant Power's Roosevelt Island Tidal Energy project. The present proposal entails installation of up to six subaqueous turbines in the east branch of the East River alongside Roosevelt Island, and undertaking a variety of engineering and natural resource studies regarding the performance of the turbines. While the data are being collected, the applicant will continue pursuing state and federal authorizations to deploy several hundred additional units to create a commercial scale enterprise. It is anticipated that the ACOE will issue a temporary permit for the demonstration project in early May. **(Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov, 203/ 882-6504)**

MORE NON-TRADITIONAL HYDRO PROPOSED IN NEW YORK's EAST RIVER

It has come to our attention that the New York Tidal Energy Company has applied to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) for a preliminary permit to construct subaqueous turbines off Roosevelt Island, New York. The Astoria Tidal Energy project is proposed to be sited in a section of the East River in New York beginning north of the tip of Roosevelt Island and extending northward to Hell Gate, and ultimately extending further northeast to Stony Point. The applicant states that water depths in the proposed project area range from approximately 20 to over 100 feet. Contemplated transmission line routes include an in-water alignment alongside Roosevelt Island to Consolidated Edison's Rainey substation (located just north of the Roosevelt Island Bridge) and/or a transmission line landing along the east bank of the East River in the general vicinity of the Astoria generating station. Staff anticipates receiving project information from FERC and subsequently beginning project coordination. The proposed turbine units are still under development and are not commercially available. Like the Verdant project, the applicants wish to perform *in situ* testing in the proposed project location and not in a more controlled laboratory setting. The strong tidal currents in the East River and its location in the high electric load New York City corridor seem to be making this area attractive to electric

generation developers. HCD staff will be reviewing the project and its potential for impacting fish habitats and migrations in the New York Bight to Long Island Sound corridor.
(Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov, 203/ 882-6504)

SHOALING AT OLD HARBOR, BLOCK ISLAND

The Federal Navigation Project at Old Harbor on Block Island, Rhode Island requires maintenance dredging. The New England District ACOE has been requested to undertake the work as expeditiously as possible. Fishery sampling in the late 1990s indicated that the Harbor was an area where winter flounder congregate; but every year the ACOE has the opportunity to deploy the hopper dredge *Currituck* to projects where shoaling is a problem and the sediment predominately sand. The *Currituck's* window of availability runs from late spring into the summer months when fishery resources are already stressed. At Old Harbor, the fishery information indicates that spawning and larval winter flounder are found in numbers unique to the Island, thus implying that the waterway merits special protections. To address this potential conflict and help define the desirability of using a hopper dredge during the later part of the winter flounder larval period, a cooperative agreement between the ACOE, Block Island, and the Rhode Island fisheries unit was forged. The agreement funds the fisheries unit to undertake a focused icthyoplankton and seining effort to characterize the resource use patterns in the Harbor and compare them to similar surveys being undertaken on the mainland. If early life stages of winter flounder congregate in Old Harbor, then dredging in the spring, as well as the use of the *Currituck*, represents threats to their well being. Although the study is being undertaken this year and the weather conditions can not be considered "typical," the data collected will add to the available knowledge and improve our understanding of the system.
(Michael.Ludwig@NOAA.gov, 203/ 882-6504)

SAYING "GOODBYE" TO THE OLD JAMESTOWN BRIDGE

The center section of the Old Jamestown Bridge was suddenly framed in several dozen puffs of black smoke and small flashes of light. Silently the main span left its foundations and plunged to the waters of the west passage of Narragansett Bay waiting below. Depending on where one was standing, the concussion from the April 18 blast was like or better than a 4th of July fireworks show finale. The demolition and relocation of the old bridge was finally underway. In preparation for the show, extensive negotiations had occurred for almost a decade to determine where, when, and how the bridge relocation was to occur. The U.S. Coast Guard showed great restraint throughout the process as they sought the removal of the derelict structure and its threat to safe navigation passing beneath the rusting hulk that increased with every passing day. In the end, a partnership of state and federal agencies developed a remarkably integrated and mutually beneficial resource management program. Elements of the program include the state creating an artificial reef program, at least two carefully designed artificial reefs off Newport, and a cooperative arrangement between the State's Department of Transportation, Department of Environmental Management and Coastal Resources Management Council, the University of Rhode Island, and several federal agencies to monitor the evolution of the reefs. The monitoring is designed to advance our understanding of reefs in temperate waters.
(Michael.Ludwig@NOAA.gov, 203/ 882-6504)

CHESAPEAKE BAY FIELD OFFICE, 410 SEVERN AVE., SUITE 107A, ANNAPOLIS,

MD 21403

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES UPPER CHESAPEAKE BAY FOSSIL SHELL DREDGING

Federal/state regulatory and resource agencies are in the latter stages of negotiating with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) on a revised proposal to extend fossil oyster shell mining activities in the upper Chesapeake Bay for one additional year (i.e., 2006). DNR proposes to dredge approximately 260,000 cubic yards of fossil shell from three areas that have been extensively mined for fossil shell in the past (i.e., Areas A, D, and F, near Pooles Island). Fossil shell to be mined in 2006 will be distributed to public grounds that have been designated as native oyster sanctuaries, reserves, and repletion grounds (i.e., supporting commercial harvest). DNR will also continue its active program of developing alternative oyster cultch sources so that the Maryland Oyster Program may continue to significantly reduce its dependence on fossil shell, a dwindling resource. Alternative cultch sources include recovery of buried oyster shell from inactive public oyster grounds in the mid-Bay region, and moving this shell to enhance substrate for oyster spat set on active grounds, and use of non-shell materials such as stone, slag, concrete rubble, and clam shells. Diverse topographic bottom relieve created by past mining actions in Areas A, D, and F is believed to provide valuable forage habitat for upper Bay finfish, and will be protected under the current proposal through spatial and temporal limitations on dredging activity. **(John.Nichols@NOAA.GOV, 410/ 267-5675)**